I

The Forest and Its People

174 THE KAINGÁNG WERE FOREST NOMADS. For perhaps three hundred years that was the only life they knew, and they resented it. The forest was not their original home, for they were driven into it from their farms on the savannahs to the west by their enemies. They speak with nostalgia of the time long ago when they lived in little fenced villages and planted corn, beans and pumpkins. Before the pacification they had no villages and instead of dividing their time between cultivating their crops and hunting in the forest as they used to do, they wandered forever in the forest and planted no crops at all.

137 The forests of Santa Catarina are vast and mighty; they are rich and well watered, tall and gloomy. Saplings and trees six feet in diameter crowd close upon one another. Bushes cluster about the trees, and the whole is woven into one solid mass by the vines that hang from trees, twine about bushes, and creep along the ground. The forest everywhere grows right down to the edges of the rivers and looms on both sides like the walls of a great corridor, silent and lovely, impenetrable except with knife or club. Flocks of geese, taboo to the Indians, for those landlocked creatures may not touch these timid and agile waterfowl, skim above the surface of the rivers, and wherever a lichen-covered cliff rises from the river's edge it throws their calls echoing back and forth across the water.

133 I used to joke with the Brazilians telling them that their beautiful state
132 of Santa Catarina was not a land but a solution, for it is indeed a country of ten thousand water courses. Innumerable little streams undermine the earth, and during the rainy season in August and September, when it sometimes rains for a month without cease, when day after day thunder rolls about the mountain tops and the wind blows and the forest rocks until you